

Mayor's Column for the December 18, 2013 Edition of the Evansville Review

### **Evansville by the Numbers**

The updated City of Evansville Park and Outdoor Recreation Plan 2013-2018 was adopted by the Common Council last week. The Plan includes updated demographic information that is quite interesting. Some of the statistics are from the 2010 U.S. Census; additional data comes from a number of other sources.

I was asked to speak to the Evansville Lions Club at their early December meeting. I presented a sampling of the updated demographic information to the group. The numbers provide some perspective on the changing Evansville community.

Below is information that I discussed with the Lions, as well as some additional information that will likely be used in the Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan Update, required by state law, that will be completed in the next eighteen months.

The 2010 U.S. Census data lists the City of Evansville population at 5,012. The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) estimated our population at 5,070 as of January 1, 2013.

The DOA data on Evansville's historical population is illuminating. From 1980 to 2012 (32 years), our city grew 78.2 %. During the same period, the Town of Union increased by 58.1%. Dane County grew 51.9% and Rock County by 14.9%. Because of Evansville's rapid growth, our portion of the Rock County population increased from 2.0% in 1980 to 3.2% in 2012. DOA projects that Evansville will continue to grow faster than surrounding communities and will subsequently become a larger share of the Rock County population.

The City of Evansville is young. The median age is 34.7. For comparison, the median age of Rock County residents is 38.0; Green County is 41.1; and Dane County is 34.4.

Looking at resident age in Evansville over time highlights some interesting trends. In 1990 there were 550 residents aged 65 and over, 17.3% of our city population. In 2010, the number of individuals in this age group was 565, but as a portion of the population decreased to 11.3%. Evansville is not following the national trend of the graying of the population. We will be able to provide for the needs of our seniors in a vibrant, youthful community.

All other age categories increased as a percentage of the resident population from 1990 to 2010. The biggest percentage increase was in the group aged 20 to 64. In 2010, 942 residents were in the 20 to 34 age bracket. This group is of childbearing age and includes young families interested in affordable housing options, good schools, and park and recreational services. The 35 to 49 age group numbered 1,148 in 2010, and these residents are nearing the end of their childbearing years. Quality of life community amenities need to address the interests of residents of a wide range of ages.

Two years ago, the city engaged Ady Voldedge, a Madison-based economic development consulting firm, to undertake a retail market analysis for Evansville. Among the demographic data in the analysis was information that the cost of living in Evansville was 5% lower than the national average while Madison's cost of living was 9% above the national average. (Housing is the biggest driver in the cost of living index and the median home price in Evansville was \$155,000, in comparison to \$206,300 in Madison. The two cities are less than 25 miles apart.)

According to the American Community Survey 2007-2011, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, the City of Evansville had the highest average household income of the cities in Rock County. Here are numbers from the Survey: Evansville - \$63,142; Edgerton - \$57,839; Janesville - \$60,027; Beloit - \$46,220; Milton - \$61,028; Rock County - \$60,867.

The 2010 U.S. Census reported 1,942 households in the City of Evansville; the average household size was 2.54. 68.1% of these households were in owner-occupied housing units and 31.9% were in renter-occupied housing units.

There are myriad ways to evaluate communities. The Center for Land Use Education, a joint venture of the College of Natural Resources at UW-Stevens Point and Cooperative Extension of the UW System, recently completed a study of sustainability in zoning ordinances in Wisconsin. Forty communities were analyzed using an evaluation tool based on The Natural Step, an internationally recognized framework for development of sustainable communities. Evansville scored second highest in sustainable zoning, behind only Madison! Some aspects that positively impacted our sustainability rating are historic preservation, infill development, open space, well-head protection, and multi-family housing. There are many opportunities for us to improve local sustainability in the future, building on our strong foundation.

The City of Evansville has a 2014 Walk Score of 74. This rating means the community is very walkable, with most errands able to be accomplished by foot. Walk Score, used by urban planning, real estate, public health, and government analysts and researchers, measures the walkability of an address (the downtown four corners in Evansville was used) by analyzing hundreds of walking routes to nearby amenities such as banks, restaurants, coffee shop, post office, library, grocery, etc. Points are awarded for distances, with maximum points for amenities within .25 miles. Walk Score also integrates pedestrian friendliness into the rating by analyzing population density and road metrics such as block length and intersection density. Scores of 70-89 are considered very walkable. 90-100 scores are a "Walker's Paradise," where daily errands do not require a car. Ratings below 50 are car-dependent, with most or all errands requiring a vehicle.

Evansville received the highest Walk Score of the Rock County communities. Other scores: Milton-71; Edgerton-69; Orfordville-48; Clinton-46; Beloit-38; Janesville-32. Nearby Dane County communities: Stoughton-78; Oregon-58; and Brooklyn-38.

Sustainability and walkability are two concepts that will receive additional focus in the future update to our city comprehensive plan.

Last week I received an e-mail inquiry from an Evansville citizen, a student at the UW-Madison working on a research project. The topic of the paper was about Evansville, including political environment and citizen involvement in local government. I explained that in the last couple of general elections with statewide races, our city has voted 2 to 1 Democratic. I further explained that local elections are non-partisan. Evansville has a number of committees with citizen members. These include the Board of Review, Plan Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Police Commission, Economic Development Committee, Tourism Subcommittee, Redevelopment Authority, Housing Authority, Park and Recreation Board, Historic Preservation Commission, Youth Center Advisory Board, and the Eager Free Public Library Board of Trustees.

Evansville, like most Wisconsin communities, has recently seen less interest by residents in local elected office. This is unfortunate, as important, even critical issues and decisions that have long-term ramifications are being addressed by local councils and boards. We currently have an opening in District 1 and no one has taken out papers to run for this seat in the spring 2014 election. If you have an interest in guiding the future of our growing community, please consider making a commitment to serve Evansville. I am happy to talk with you about serving on our Common Council. My home number is 882-5528; my office number is 882-2266. You can also contact the City Clerk at City Hall for information, 882-2266.

### **Community Announcements**

Be sure to make your selection immediately for the size trash containers you want for the coming switch to automated trash collection. Your information can be delivered to City Hall during business hours. If we do not hear from property owners, the default selection is the largest option at 96 gallons.

There will be an indoor farmers market and craft fair on Saturday, December 21, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Creekside Place, 102 Maple Street.

City Hall will be closed on Tuesday, December 24, Wednesday, December 25, and Wednesday, January 1, for the holidays.

The Evansville Common Council, at the recommendation of the Park Board, approved the closure of Leonard-Leota Park **roads** to vehicles for the winter, with very limited exceptions. The Park remains open for winter activity and use by walkers, cross-country skiers, disc golfers, fishermen, and others.

I have been asked by several citizens about the status of the Ice Age Trail planning process for Rock County. I recently e-mailed the National Park Service requesting an update. The response from the Park Service is that all of the comments from the public

open house meetings and online comment period have been compiled and summarized. They are now undertaking an environmental analysis on the three options. The analysis includes a lot of landowner contact to make sure that the preferred choice is doable. I was told that "Evansville was quite well represented!" The current estimate is that a preferred alternative will be selected sometime next summer, with a final group of open house meetings taking place in fall 2014.

### **Community Thanks**

Our community thanks the Evansville Ecumenical Choir for the beautiful, joyous Christmas Concert held on a gorgeous, snowy Sunday evening. Choir members from eighteen area churches in Evansville, Cooksville, Stoughton, Brooklyn, Janesville, Fitchburg, Madison, Oregon, Verona, and Brodhead joined together to present an inspirational program.

Evansville is grateful for the many donors and contributors to AWARE in Evansville programs. Koats for Kids, Toys for Evansville, Refuse 2 Bruise Teen Dating Violence Prevention, and the Love Light Tree recognition are successful because of the many local supporters. Heartfelt thanks to all!